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ABSTRACT

The 1994 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) Reading Assessment was administered to a national sample of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. National reading proficiency results were reported for students at each grade and within various subgroups of the population. State-level results were reported for individual states or jurisdictions that chose to participate in the 1994 Trial State Assessment. Major findings for the nation, regions, and states include: the average reading proficiency of twelfth-grade students declined significantly from 1992 to 1994; the decline in reading proficiency was concentrated among lower performing students; and the percentage of twelfth-grade students who reached the "proficient" level in reading declined from 1992 to 1994. Major findings for student subgroups include: across the nation, there were declines in average reading proficiency from 1992 to 1994 for Hispanic students in grade 4 as well as for White, Black, and Hispanic students in grade 12; reading proficiency at all 3 grades was higher on average for students whose parents had more education; and students attending nonpublic schools displayed higher average reading proficiencies than their counterparts attending public schools. Contextual factors related to higher average reading proficiency include: having a wide array of literacy materials in their homes; reading for fun on their own time; watching less than 4 hours of television daily; and being asked by their teachers to explain or support their understanding of what they read. (RS)

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ED 396 273

Results From The

NAEP 1994 Reading Assessment

— At A Glance

The ability to read and understand is essential to each citizen's informed and full participation in a democratic society. Interpreting the meaning of current events, learning the skills necessary for workplace success, evaluating the ideas expressed in various publications, or finding enjoyment in a book are examples of how reading affects what we do and who we are.

The importance of reading as a life-long activity underlies the need to monitor the progress of students' reading achievement. The National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) has fulfilled this need on a regular basis for more than a quarter of a century. As a project of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES), NAEP collects valuable information about what students know and can do, and regularly reports these findings to educators, parents, policymakers, and the general public.

The NAEP 1994 Reading Assessment was administered to national samples of students in grades 4, 8, and 12. National reading proficiency results are reported for students at each grade and within various subgroups of the population. State-level results are presented for individual states or jurisdictions that chose to participate in the 1994 Trial State Assessment. Trends in reading performance since 1992 are also reported for the nation and for jurisdictions that participated in both assessments.

Students' reading performance is summarized on the NAEP reading proficiency scale, which ranges from 0 to 500. In addition, results for each grade are reported according to three achievement levels: *Basic*, *Proficient*, and *Advanced*. The achievement levels are based on collective judgments about what students should know and be able to do in reading. The *Basic* level denotes partial mastery or prerequisite knowledge and skills that are fundamental for proficient work at each grade. The *Proficient* level represents solid academic performance and demonstrated competence over challenging subject matter. The *Advanced* level signifies superior performance.

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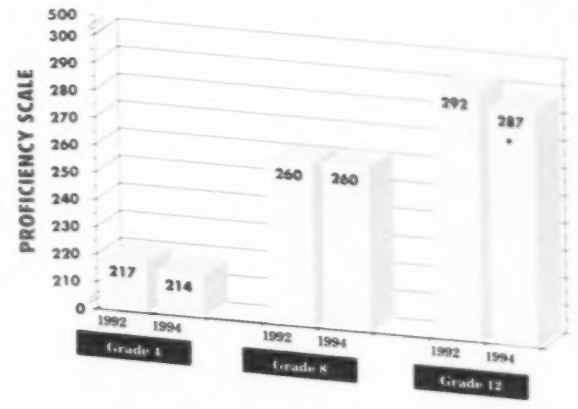
Major Findings for the Nation, Regions, and States

- The most striking finding from the 1994 assessment is that the average reading proficiency of twelfth-grade students declined significantly from 1992 to 1994. This decline was observed across a broad range of subgroups. Significant changes in average proficiency were not observed in the national population of fourth or eighth graders. (See Figure 1.)

Figure 1. Average Reading Proficiency for the Nation

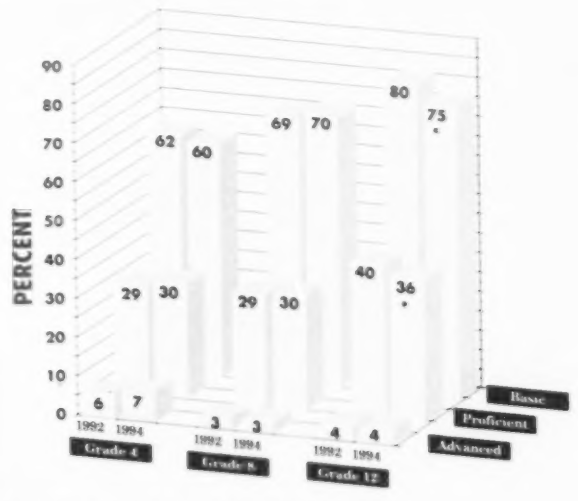


*Significant decrease between 1992 and 1994

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments.

- In 1994, twelfth graders in the Northeast, Central, and West regions displayed lower average reading proficiencies than their 1992 counterparts.
- The decline in average proficiency among twelfth graders between 1992 and 1994 was concentrated among lower performing students — those scoring at the 10th, 25th, and 50th percentiles. No significant declines were observed among twelfth graders at the 75th or 90th percentiles.
- The decline in overall reading proficiency at the twelfth grade was evident in all three assessed purposes for reading: *reading for literary experience, reading to gain information,* and *reading to perform a task.*
- The eight states with the highest average reading proficiencies in 1994 for fourth graders in public schools were Maine, North Dakota, Wisconsin, New Hampshire, Massachusetts, Iowa, Connecticut, and Montana. (See Table 1.)
- Between 1992 and 1994, the average reading proficiencies of fourth graders declined in eight states: California, Delaware, Louisiana, New Hampshire, New Mexico, Pennsylvania, South Carolina, and Virginia.
- The percentage of twelfth-grade students who reached the *Proficient* level in reading declined from 1992 to 1994. There also was a decrease in the percentage of twelfth graders at or above the *Basic* level. (See Figure 2.)
- In 1994, 30 percent of fourth graders, 30 percent of eighth graders, and 36 percent of twelfth graders attained the *Proficient* level in reading. Across the three grades, 3 to 7 percent reached the *Advanced* level.

Figure 2. Percent of Students At or Above the Reading Achievement Levels for the Nation



*Significant decrease between 1992 and 1994

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments.

TABLE 1

Average Grade 4 Reading Proficiency NAEP Trial State Assessments in Reading Public Schools Only

THE NATION'S REPORT CARD naep 1992 1994 Reading Assessment

	1992 Average Proficiency	1994 Average Proficiency
Nation	215	212
Region		
Northeast	220	212
Southeast	211	208
Central	218	218
West	212	212
State		
Alabama	207	208
Arizona	209	206
Arkansas	211	209
California	202	197<
Colorado	217	213
Connecticut	222	222
Delaware ‡	213	206<<
Florida	208	205
Georgia	212	207
Hawaii	203	201
Indiana	221	220
Iowa	225	223
Kentucky	213	212
Louisiana	204	197<<
Maine ‡	227	228
Maryland	211	210
Massachusetts	226	223
Minnesota	221	218
Mississippi	199	202
Missouri	220	217
Montana †	—	222
Nebraska †‡	221	220
New Hampshire †‡	228	223<
New Jersey ‡	223	219
New Mexico	211	205<
New York ‡	215	212
North Carolina	212	214
North Dakota	226	225
Pennsylvania †	221	215<
Rhode Island †	217	220
South Carolina	210	203<<
Tennessee †	212	213
Texas	213	212
Utah	220	217
Virginia	221	213<<
Washington	—	213
West Virginia	216	213
Wisconsin †	224	224
Wyoming	223	221
Other Jurisdictions		
DoDEA	—	218
Guam	182	181

Differences between two groups may be partially explained by other factors not included in this table.

<< The value for 1994 was significantly lower than the value for 1992 at or about the 95 percent certainty level. These notations indicate statistical significance from a multiple comparison procedure based on 38 jurisdictions participating in both 1994 and 1992. If looking at only one state, < indicates the value for 1994 was significantly lower than the value for 1992 at or about the 95 percent certainty level. Statistically significant differences between 1994 and 1992 for the state comparison samples for the nation and regions are not indicated.

† Did not satisfy one of the guidelines for school sample participation rates in 1994.

‡ Did not satisfy one of the guidelines for school participation rates in 1992.

— Jurisdiction did not participate in 1992 Trial State Assessment.

DoDEA Department of Defense Education Activity Overseas Schools.

SOURCE: National Center for Education Statistics, National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments.

Major Findings for Student Subgroups

- Across the nation, there were declines in average reading proficiency from 1992 to 1994 for Hispanic students in grade 4 as well as for White, Black, and Hispanic students in grade 12.
- Consistent with previous NAEP reports, reading proficiency at all three grades was higher on average for students whose parents had more education. Among twelfth graders, the decline in average reading proficiency since 1992 was evident for students reporting all levels of parental education.
- At all three grades, female students had higher average reading proficiencies than male students. At twelfth grade, the performance of both male and female students declined between 1992 and 1994.
- In 1994, fourth-, eighth-, and twelfth-grade students attending nonpublic schools displayed higher average reading proficiencies than their counterparts attending public schools. The performance of twelfth graders in public and nonpublic schools declined since 1992.

Contextual Factors Related to Reading Proficiency

Home and school factors can play important roles in the development of students' literacy abilities. Fourth, eighth, and twelfth graders who participated in the NAEP reading assessment were asked to complete questionnaires about their home and school experiences related to reading achievement and literacy development. Also, questionnaires about students' instructional experiences were completed by their teachers and school administrators. These instruments provide valuable information about students' literacy-related experiences at home and school.

- In 1994, students who reported having a greater array of literacy materials in their homes displayed higher average reading achievement. Among twelfth graders, there was a decline between 1992 and 1994 in the presence of these materials at home.
- At all three grades, students who more frequently read for fun on their own time had higher average proficiencies. Twelfth-grade students in 1994 reported reading for fun less frequently than their 1992 counterparts.
- At all three grades, students who reported more frequent home discussions about their studies demonstrated higher reading proficiencies. There was a decline in the frequency of this activity among twelfth graders between the 1992 and 1994 assessments.
- In 1994, students who reported watching less than four hours of television daily displayed higher average reading proficiencies than their peers who watched more television.
- At each grade in 1994, students who read five or fewer pages each day for school and homework had the lowest average reading proficiencies. Since 1992, there was an increase in the percentage of twelfth graders who reported reading five or fewer pages each day, and a decline in the percentage who reported reading 11 or more pages.
- Eighth and twelfth graders who reported being asked by their teachers at least once a week to explain or support their understanding of what they read had higher average reading proficiencies than students who were asked to do so less often. The reports of twelfth-grade students in 1994 indicated that they were not asked to do this as frequently as their counterparts in 1992.
- Eighth and twelfth graders who reported being asked by their teachers at least once a week to discuss various interpretations of what they read displayed higher average reading proficiencies than students who were asked to do so less often. According to eighth- and twelfth-grade students' reports, these discussions were less frequent in 1994 than in 1992.

For More Information . . .

More complete results of the NAEP 1994 Reading Assessment are available in two NCES publications:

NAEP 1994 Reading: A First Look (Revised Edition)

NAEP 1994 Reading Report Card for the Nation and the States

The *First Look* highlights the overall and demographic results while the *Report Card* is a more extensive treatment of the findings and includes discussions of contextual factors that are related to reading proficiency.

For ordering information on these reports, write:

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